

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ROME 05239 131351Z

45

ACTION EUR-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4329

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY

AMCONSUL ZAGREB

AMCONSUL TRIESTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 5239

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IT, YO

SUBJECT: ZONE B DISPUTE

REF: BELGRADE 1752

1. RECOGNIZING THAT THE VIEW INTO THE MOTIVATIONS OF BOTH ROME AND BELGRADE MAY BE SOMEWHAT MURKY, WE NONETHELESS FEEL IT WORTHWHILE TO TAKE A LOOK AGAIN AT THE BASIC PROBLEM. WE ARE DEALING HERE WITH A DE FACTO TERRITORIAL SITUATION RELATIVELY SATISFACTORY TO BOTH SIDES, BUT WHICH IN TERMS OF FORMAL RECOGNITION HAS BEEN A CLIFF HANGER FOR TOO LONG. THE DIFFICULTY LIES IN THE FACT THAT MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF THE RESPECTIVE SOVEREIGNTIES IN ZONES A AND B IS NOT A SATISFACTORY BARGAIN FROM THE ITALIAN SIDE. THEY FEEL NO NEED FOR YUGOSLAV RECOGNITION OF ITALIAN SOVEREIGNTY IN ZONE A. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE ITALIANS HAVE NOT FOUND ANY OTHER TRADE OFF WHICH AN ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AN/OR GOVERNMENT COULD SAFELY ACCEPT AND WHICH THE YUGOSLAVS WILL BUY. THE YUGOSLAVS ARE TIRED OF WAITING.

2. THE ITALIAN PROBLEM PERHAPS WARRANTS RECOGNITION RATHER THAN SYMPATHY, BUT NO AMOUNT OF HARD LOGIC OR CLEAR ANALYSIS HAS SO FAR BEEN ABLE TO SUMMON UP THE STRENGTH FOR ROME TO LOOK THE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ROME 05239 131351Z

REALITY IN THE EYE, ACT, AND FACE THE CHEAP SHOTS THAT WOULD BE

IMMEDIATELY FORTHCOMING PRIMARILY FROM THE DEMAGOGIC RIGHT, BUT WITH APPEAL TO A BROADER SPECTRUM OF WHAT IS AFTER ALL AN EMOTIONAL ISSUE FOR MANY PEOPLE.

3. FOR THE ITALIANS TO SETTLE THE ZONE B ISSUE THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A CONVENIENT TIME. AT THE MOMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, THE GOI MUST RIDE OUT THE STORM OF THE DIVORCE REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN, BUT EVEN AFTER THE REFERENDUM NO ONE CAN EXPECT A GOI TO TURN TO WHAT IS A MINOR PROBLEM TO THE ITALIANS. AND THIS IS PRESUMABLY THE HEART OF THE MATTER: THE ITALIANS COULD COMFORTABLY WAIT FOREVER TO SETTLE THE ISSUE, WHILE THE YUGOSLAVS, UNDERSTANDABLY, WANT POSITIVE ACTION NOW.

4. IF WE SET ASIDE THE THEORIES OF MORE ARCANE MOTIVATION, WE CAN ACCEPT THE OBVIOUS AS BEING ALSO REAL, AND ASSUME THE OFFENDING SIGNS WENT UP BECAUSE THE YUGOSLAVS WERE TIRED OF WAITING AND WANTED TO SIGNAL CLEARLY THEIR INTENTION TO ASSERT UNILATERALLY THE ZONE B STATUS WHICH THE ITALIANS HAVE REFUSED TO RECOGNIZE FORMALLY. THE ITALIANS BELIEVED THEY HAD TO PROTEST. AN EARLIER SIMILAR SCENARIO HAD RESULTED, AFTER ALL, IN THE SIGNS COMING DOWN. WITH THE WORDING OF THE PROTEST, THE ITALIANS PUT THEIR FOOT IN IT, OF COURSE. BUT TO WITHDRAW THE PROTEST WOULD BE TO GIVE AWAY THE POINT. TO REMOVE THE SIGNS, WE ASSUME, WOULD SIMILARLY GIVE AWAY THE GAME FROM THE YUGOSLAV SIDE.

5. FROM THIS POSITION OF DEAD CENTER, THE ITALIANS CANNOT MOVE UNDER THE BLATANT PRESSURE OF RALLIES, SPEECHES AND YUGOSLAV TROOP EXERCISES. THE YUGOSLAVS, MEANWHILE, GIVE EVERY INDICATION OF DETERMINATION TO KEEP THE ITALIANS' FEET TO THE FIRE UNTIL MOTION IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION IS SHOWN. DO THE YUGOSLAVS REALLY BELIEVE THE ITALIANS CAN BE DRAGGED TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE, TO CONCEDE UNDER PRESSURE WHAT THE GOI COULD NOT GRANT BEFORE, PRECISELY BECAUSE THE ITALIANS COULD FIND NO WAY TO AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF SURRENDER? WE DO NOT THINK SO.

6. THE ITALIANS WANT MORE TIME AND THEY ARE STILL ASKING THE YUGOSLAVS FOR HELP TO FIND A WAY OUT. THE ITALIANS ARGUE THAT MINOR RECTIFICATIONS (THEY SPEAK OF 1000 HECTARES ON THEIR SIDE AND 300 ON THE YUGOSLAV SIDE) COULD GIVE THE GOI THE COSMETIC THEY FEEL THEY NEED. WE ARE UNABLE TO JUDGE WHETHER THE YUGOSLAVS

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ROME 05239 131351Z

SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT PLAY THIS GAME.

7. ALL OF WHICH BRINGS US TO THE POINT: WE BELIEVE THE CORRECT USG POSITION SHOULD BE TO STICK TO THE POSITION OF OCTOBER 5, 1954, WHILE URGING BOTH SIDES TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT. THIS HAS BEEN DONE, AND WE CAN CONTINUE TO PRESS THIS THEME. TO INSERT OURSELVES FURTHER WOULD TEND TO ERODE OUR POLICY NOT RPT NOT TO SUPPORT THE CLAIMS ON EITHER SIDE. THE ITALIANS RECOGNIZE THAT THE NOTE OF MARCH 11

WAS FAULTY. THEY MAY NOT BE SURE THAT THE PRESENT SCENARIO WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PLAYED OUT DESPITE THE OFFENDING NOTE. THE SIGNS REMAIN UP, AS OF OUR LATEST INFORMATION, AND THE YUGOSLAV PRESSURE CONTINUES. TO CONCEDE WHAT THE YUGOSLAVS WANT, UNDER SUCH PRESSURE, WOULD BE CONSIDERED HUMILIATING BY A BROAD CROSS SECTION OF ITALIAN (AND OTHER EUROPEAN) OPINION.

8. WE SHARE BELGRADE'S PROBLEM IN NOT HAVING ALL THE FACTS. WE CANNOT PREDICT THE NEXT ITALIAN MOVE AND WE DO NOT KNOW, IN THE END, WHETHER THE SIGNS ARE THERE TO STAY, OR HOW THE ITALIANS MIGHT ACCEPT SUCH A REALITY. POL. DIR. GEN. DUCCI HAS INDICATED THAT THE GOI IS FEELING THE PRESSURE AND IS TENDING TOWARD SERIOUSLY NEGOTIATING A SOLUTION BUT CANNOT MAKE THIS KIND OF TOUGH DECISION PRIOR TO THE REFERENDUM. HE IMPLIED THAT THE GOI, AFTER THAT EVENT, MIGHT BE ABLE TO BITE THE BULLET.

9. WE CONCLUDE, IN THESE UNCERTAINTIES, THAT IF THE USG IS TO GO BEYOND URGING CALM, WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT THE TIMING OF ANY POSSIBLE TALKS COULD NOT BE SEPARATED IN THE ITALIAN VIEW FROM AN EARLY REDUCTION OF TENSION BY THE YUGOSLAVS. VOLPE

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